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ABSTRACT

Numerous concepts in the teaching of reading have been emphasized since the middle of the 20th century. Four such concepts are the Initial Teaching Alphabet (ITA), traditional linguistic procedures, rebus, and programmed reading. Each has advantages and serious disadvantages. ITA stressed a rather consistent sound/symbol relationship, but pupils had to make the transition from ITA to traditional graphemes. Traditional linguistic approaches suffered from the problem that, as one child said, "no one speaks that way." Rebus suffered from the problem that there were too many difficult words that could not be shown in picture form. Fragmentation of subject matter read is inherent in the programmed reading approach. Basal reading approaches, with their many imperfections, are liked by many teachers. In teaching early primary grade pupils, the experience chart is commonly used, but experience charts do not meet the needs of talented and gifted pupils. Individualized reading's strength is that pupils may choose their reading materials, but some teachers report that too many pupils cannot find a book of interest and fail to stay on task when reading library books. Reading teachers need to take into consideration students' reading interests, the complexity of the reading material, purpose for reading, the meaning that pupils attach to the story content, and the amount of assistance that a pupil needs to achieve in reading. (RS)

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Marlow Ediger

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READING INSTRUCTION, WHICH DIRECTION?

Numerous concepts in the teaching of reading have been emphasized during the time that I began my experiences in education in 1949. I was an undergraduate student in teacher education starting in 1949 and began teaching on the elementary school level in 1951 with a 60 hour teaching certificate. Since that time I have completed my BSE in 1958, my MSE in 1960, and my Ed d in 1963.

Introduction

I would like to mention a few trends that were short lived but seemingly somewhat popular for a very short period of time. This included the Initial Teaching Alphabet (ITA). The ITA was developed in England by James Pittman in the early 1960's. There were selected sound arguments in ITA adoption. The following were mentioned frequently:

1. consistency between symbol and sound in a one to one relationship with forty four ITA symbols corresponding in a one to one relationship with forty four sounds.
2. criticism of traditional orthography with its lack of consistency between symbol and sound, e.g. seventeen ways of spelling the 'oo' sound such as in the following words -- blue, to, too, soon, rheumatism, two, flue, among others.
3. early success in reading for young children due to having a consistent set of grapheme/ phonemic relationships.
4. the ease with which selected pupils made the transition from ITA to traditional orthography.

The latter reason, item #4, did make for a stumbling block when using ITA as a system of beginning reading instruction. There were many unusual symbols developed by ITA when writing a system of forty four graphemes (symbols) for forty four unique sounds. The following are a few examples of the most unusual symbols:

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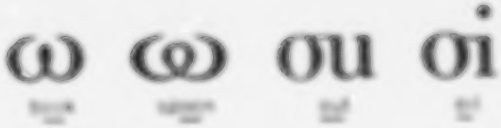

Thus beginning readers learned one set of symbols in reading instruction and needed to make changes to traditional symbols after having mastered the ITA symbols on the first grade level. Confusion might well been an end result. Why not rather start pupils with the traditional set of symbols in the teaching of reading?

A former graduate student in my class became assistant superintendent of schools at Arnold, Missouri; he became a staunch advocate of ITA during the latter 1960's. I spoke at length with him about first grade pupils in Arnold, Missouri who were instructed in ITA. The assistant superintendent had much praise for ITA. At a later time, he mentioned in a conversation that parents in the district wanted pupils to use traditional basal readers in reading instruction. This ended the use of ITA as an approach in teaching reading in that school district.

A second concept in the teaching of reading which has largely become an item of the past is traditional linguistic procedures as advocated by Leonard Bloomfield and Charles Fries. Here pupils were to learn to read in terms of patterns in language use such as in the following examples:

1. Man can fan.
2. Mat sat on fat cat.

In the first above named sentence, each word patterns with the "an" family of words. In sentence two, each word patterns with the "at" family of words. the word "on" is an exception indicating the difficulty of writing even short sentences in which words pattern in sound. There are too many commonly used words which do not pattern such as "the, that, where, when , and which" as examples.

I supervised a student teacher and a cooperating teacher in the Moulton-Udall school district in Iowa in the middle 1970's; they used the traditional linguistic approach as a supplement to the basal reader. These two teachers developed their own sentences for use in the

teaching of reading, such as "Let Met set pet on a bet." The student teacher and the cooperating teacher wanted third grade pupils to see how words can pattern. Pupils stated that these sentences did not make sense. The teachers felt the traditional linguistic approach had too few words in a set which pattern.

Textbooks in spelling may emphasize a traditional linguistic approach in learning opportunities for pupils. Thus a spelling lesson for the week may stress learning to spell words that end in the letter "s," a linguistic element. Separate weekly lessons may also stress the following for individual weeks in spelling texts;

1. words which rhyme and thus follow a pattern.
2. words which have a long vowel sound and end in silent "e."
3. words which have a short vowel sound.
4. words which possess a long vowel sound.
5. words which have two vowel letters in which the first letter has a long vowel sound.
7. words which end in the linguistic element "le."
8. words which are antonyms as well as words which are synonyms.
9. words in a set which start with the same consonant letter and have the same beginning sound.
10. words which are irregularly spelled.

The use of rebus has also had its short endurance as a means of teaching reading. With rebus, the pupil may see a picture of a house instead of the abstract word "house" in reading a story. Beliefs in teaching reading using rebus stressed that learners may read rather complex content since difficult words are shown as illustrated in pictures. However, a major problem with rebus was that words which may be in picture form are not the most difficult ones to read. Thus abstract words such as "when, where, why, which," and "what," present problems to selected readers and these words cannot be pictured. During the 1970's, a few of my student teachers and cooperating teachers whom I supervised in the public schools stated

that the pictures contained as rebus were not clear to pupils. Sometimes it was easier for pupils to read the abstract words than to determine what the pictures portrayed.

A fourth approach which receives very little attention presently in reading instruction is programmed reading in book form. With programmed reading, the pupil reads a sentence or two responds to a completion test item covering the content read. Then the pupil uncovers the answer to check his/her response with that given by the programmer. If the pupil responded correctly, he/she was reward in being correct. if an incorrect response was given by the pupil, he/she still knows the correct answer and is ready for the next programmed item. The procedure is the same again and again in reading using programmed instruction such as read a sentence or more (not a lengthy set of sentences), respond to a test item covering content read, and check the personal response with that of the programmer. I have had numerous opportunities to observe pupils reading using a programmed approach. Pupils tended to be motivated and kept on task. I believe that learners individually perceived progress and felt motivated as they moved forward in the programmed content. Learners individually could adjust the pace of reading to meet their very own personal styles. The content read moved forward very slowly in complexity so that pupils rarely made mistakes in using programmed reading materials.

I supervised student and cooperating teachers in Ottumwa, Iowa and observed pupils in programmed reading classes. The Sullivan series of programmed readers were used here. The teachers voted to disband using programmed reading about seven years ago. The reasons given were the following when talking to these teachers:

1. sentences read were to isolated, holism in content was lacking.
2. the programs were too routine with read, respond, and check on the pupil's part being emphasized when reading sequential content.
3. there were few opportunities for teachers to teach reading skills when using programmed reading.

Meaning in Teaching Reading

There are procedures in reading instruction which emphasis pupils reading what they have experienced and composed. The experience chart in reading comes in this category. Thus if pupils have had an experience such as observing nature in a field trip on the school grounds, they may wish to have the teacher record their very own ideas on the chalkboard or using the personal computer. Following the recording of ideas from pupils, the teacher points to the words and phrases as pupils read orally with the former's guidance. The content read is familiar to pupils and meaningful reading may then accrue.

A second approach termed a meaningful approach in the teaching of reading stresses individualized reading. Here, the pupil chooses sequential trade books to read. The pupil tends to choose those library books which are on his/her interest levels; the chosen books tend also to be on the personal reading of the chooser. Thus pupils may select sequential library books to read which are of interest and can be read with comprehension and understanding. A conference generally is conducted with teacher assistance after a learner has completed reading a library book. The conference stresses assessing the pupil in terms of achievement in reading comprehension, word attack skills possessed, and attitudes toward reading.

When speaking to teachers using individualized reading on the fifth and sixth grade levels in Kirksville, Missouri Public Schools, each teacher liked the individualized reading approach since it stressed a one on one approach in pupils selecting library books to read. These teachers also felt positively in a one on one relationship when having conferences with pupils covering content read in the library book just completed by a learner. These same teachers stated the following;

1. it is difficult to keep up with conferences since pupils have to wait after reading a library book to have the conference. Thus there are too many pupils in a classroom to emphasize a good individualized reading program.

2. there are not enough library books from which pupils may

choose to truly meet the needs of learners.

3. there are too many pupils that cannot select/choose a library book to read on their own.

Talented pupils seemingly liked individualized reading since the "sky was the limit" in what could be read. Many of these pupils probably would not have needed to have a conference with the teacher after completing the reading of a library book.

Developing Meaning in Reading Instruction

Basal readers, their manuals, and related workbooks emphasize a strong teacher role in guiding pupils to understand and attach meaning to ongoing lessons and units of study. Generally, teachers and pupils could not proceed as independently with basal reader use as compared to the experience chart and individualized reading approaches.

In using basal readers, the teacher needs to provide readiness for reading for pupils. This is done in a variety of ways. One procedure that many of my student teachers and cooperating teachers used follows the following plan:

1. have pupils see the new words in print contained in the story to be read. These words may be printed in neat manuscript letters on the chalkboard, on a transparency, or on a computer monitor. The words introduced prior to pupil reading may be printed in isolation or within a sentence. I recommend the latter approach.

2. guide pupils to develop meaning for the new words as used in the basal reader selection. A new word may be defined or used in context by pupils within meaningful sentences. Background information may be developed within pupils at the same time that learners attach meaning to the new words in the story to be read. A variety of activities may be provided learners to provide the necessary background information so that the entire reading experience is meaningful.

3. assist learners to develop a purpose for reading. The purpose(s) may be stated as questions for which pupils need to find answers from reading the selection in the basal reader. The teacher

may also encourage pupils to identify questions which require reading for answers from the ongoing lesson or unit in the basal reader.

4. there will be individuals who need assistance in word recognition during silent/ oral reading.

5. discuss with pupils the story content read after the silent/oral reading.

6. give help to pupils who need assistance in phonics in grapheme/ phoneme relationships. Provide this help only if needed to pupils.

With basal reader use, the manual section will give objectives, learning opportunities, and evaluation procedures for teacher use in teaching pupils. I would suggest providing help in the following word attack skills on all grade levels in reading instruction:

1. context clues use.
2. phonics instruction.
3. syllabication assistance.
4. picture clue application.
5. structural analysis.
6. configuration clues.

I also recommend strongly that teachers help pupils in the following specific comprehension skills;

1. reading to skim and scan.
2. reading to secure facts.
3. reading to obtain sequential ideas.
4. reading to engage in critical and creative thinking.
5. reading to solve problems.
6. reading to notice cause and effect.
7. reading to follow directions.
8. reading to develop concepts and generalizations.

I have tried to indicate here that basal reader use involves rather strong leadership from the teacher in using these kinds of materials in

the teaching of reading. Thus the thinking in basal reader use is quite opposite of individualized reading in which the learner chooses a library book to read independently and has a followup conference with the classroom teacher. The pupil might even take the lead in discussing content and choosing the passage to read orally when individualized reading is in evidence in the conference part of teaching.

I have noticed that many teachers use the above approach in teaching reading using basal readers. My observations are based on thirty years of supervising student and cooperating teachers in the public schools.

Other Approaches in the Teaching of Reading

Presently, the whole language approach in reading instruction has come back to our attention. Actually, the experience chart and individualized reading approaches are whole language in nature. They do emphasize holism in that pupils read entire library books for the latter. Pupils compose holistic ideas in what has been experienced such as from a related excursion or discussing a set of objects or pictures in the classroom setting which in sequence provided learner's ideas for the experience chart. Holism is stressed when pupils with teacher guidance read content from the entire experience chart. Neither the individualized reading nor the experience chart approach is strong in stressing phonics as a part of the reading program. Phonics may be brought into the conference in individualized reading as needed. Learners may make discoveries pertaining to phonics from the experience chart.

The whole language approach stresses pupils reading entire stories or books to grasp meaning of ideas and content, not to analyze words when different word recognition techniques are used. Pupils are to learn to read using a philosophy of holism in reading instruction. Learners need motivational activities prior to using the whole language approach in reading a given selection. For example on the primary grade levels, the teacher introduces and reads the entire selection orally to pupils as learners follow along in their very own reading

materials. Next, children read orally along with the teacher. Then pupils read the same content individually. A discussion follows the rereading experiences in whole language procedures of instruction. Learners, it is felt, will be able to read and understand content when a very minimal amount of phonics instruction is in evidence. Content in its wholeness need to be understand rather than parts. The part method of teaching, it is felt, interrupts comprehension which stresses gestalt psychology or wholeness of ideas. A recurring issue pertains to whole language approaches in teaching of reading versus an analytical method such as phonics instruction. Along with whole language approaches in teaching reading, student and regular teachers I have supervised tend to bring in phonics to those pupils who need assistance in word recognition techniques.

I believe all university supervisors of student teachers have observed situations where workbooks are used by teachers in emphasizing sequential lessons in phonics. The entire workbook contains ordered lessons of phonics with specific objectives for pupils to achieve. This would be the complete opposite of whole language approaches. These workbooks stress pupils analyzing words into component grapheme/phoneme relationships. When teachers use phonics workbooks heavily in the reading curriculum the graphemes/phonemes stressed may or may not relate to what pupils will be reading from a basal or a library book at a specific time. Sometimes these phonics lessons are taught in complete isolation from the actual act of reading. An in between approach is to stress both holism and phonics in reading instruction. Many reading specialists feel and believe there is room for both approaches.

Reading as making predictions has also become important. As an individual reads silently or orally, he/she predicts what will come next. If incorrect ideas are formed in terms of sequential meaningful content, the reader reinterprets as he/she continues to read. A person then does not laboriously read each word, but reads more rapidly and receives feedback with ensuing information. A holistic approach in reading is certainly in emphasis here. A good reader reads at a certain rate of

speed to comprehend well and does not look at each letter in every word in the act of reading. a slow reader does not comprehend content well due to a lack of appropriate speed to understand sequential ideas. Speed reading is not stressed here, but the learner is to read at an appropriate rate to make connections of content read and attach meaning thereto. There is much merit in stressing prediction procedures in the teaching of reading. Thus learners need to comprehend content well in quality thought units and not become bogged down with analyzing words excessively into component parts such as in sequential lessons in phonics instruction.

Reading Recovery, an approach in reading instruction used initially in New Zealand, has received considerable emphasis recently in the teaching of reading. Here, specially trained teachers using this methodology, work with an individual pupil on the first grade level. Pupils chosen for the Reading Recovery program have definite problems in reading. A teacher works one on one with a pupil. The story content is introduced to the individual pupil. Then the teacher works with a pupil for a thirty minute period of time. Here, the teacher reads to and listens to the pupil read. Diagnosis is involved in that the teacher attempts to determine what the individual child needs to become a better reader of holistic content. Phonics receives little emphasis and is taught as needed.

When observing pupils taught in Reading Recovery, I find this approach has much merit. The one on one procedure makes it so that pupils need to attend to the task at hand. The teacher can continually monitor the individual pupil taught in Reading Recovery. Many pupils could benefit from a one on one approach. The teacher's time is the individual pupil's time alone and no one else.

In Closing

I have seen numerous reading approaches come and go in the teaching of reading. These procedures are the ITA, traditional linguistic procedures, rebus, and programmed reading. Each of these approaches had advantages. However the disadvantages were very

pronounced. For example, ITA stressed a rather consistent sound/symbol relationship. This is truly commendable. A great disadvantage is the transition that pupils need to make from ITA to traditional graphemes. Traditional linguistic approaches of Bloomfield and Fries had as a major advantage that pupil learned patterns in the structure of the English language. But as one child mentioned, "But no one speaks that way." Rebus stresses using pictures in place of difficult words in reading making it so that learners may read more complex content. However, there are too many difficult words that cannot be shown in picture form. Programmed reading has an advantage that pupils receive immediate knowledge of results of how they responded to a multiple choice item covering content read. Fragmentation of subject matter read is certainly inherent in this approach of step by step learning.

It appears that basal reading approaches with their many imperfections are liked by many teachers. I have listened to teachers say the following about the values of using basal readers:

1. it's a rather complete program of reading instruction with objectives, learning activities, and evaluation procedures in the manual section.
2. story content is appealing to many pupils.
3. interest in the story can be developed within learners.
4. one can use his/her very own procedures in teaching reading when basals are used.
5. it seems like frills and fads come and go, but the basal reader remains as a stable element.

In teaching early primary grade pupils, the experience chart is used rather commonly. Teachers here feel that pupils do well in the experience chart approach in teaching since learners have the background information to read from their very own personal experiences. Thus the content given for the experience chart come from pupils' experiences. With teacher guidance, pupils read subject matter they gave for the chart. There are a few teachers who say that the

experience chart does not meet the needs of talented and gifted pupils. The latter then need more challenge in reading instruction.

Individualized reading has its strengths in that the individual pupil may choose, from among alternatives, that which is interesting and satisfying. The level of difficulty of the library book chosen is also left to the individual pupil. Selected teachers say that too many pupils can not find a book of interest and purpose and fail to stay on task when reading library books.

Individual needs of pupils in reading need to be met. Learners differ from each other in content that is of personal interest. They differ also from each other in what is too difficult and what is too easy to read. Thus pupils individually are on different reading levels of achievement. The reading teacher then needs to take the following into consideration.

1. interests possessed by individual pupils in subject matter read.
2. the complexity level of the reading materials.
3. purpose for reading that a teacher can develop within pupils.
4. meaning that pupils attach to story content in materials read.
5. amount of assistance that a pupil needs to achieve more optimally in reading.